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Preparatory Committee for the Special Session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children in 2001
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Proposals on the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children in 2001

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In resolution 51/186 of 16 December 1996, the General Assembly decided to hold a special session in the year 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children and to consider further actions and initiatives. In resolution 54/93 of 7 December 1999, the Assembly established an open-ended preparatory committee, which will hold an organizational session on 7 and 8 February 2000. The present report has been prepared in response to resolution 54/93, in which the Assembly decided that the organizational session would address issues such as the form, the participation of a broad range of actors and the agenda of the special session, and prepare for the outcome.

The report contains proposals by the Secretary-General on the scope of the review by the preparatory committee and consideration of further initiatives and on the role of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations in the preparatory process for the special session.

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I. Introduction

A. World Summit for Children

1. The World Summit for Children, which was held at United Nations Headquarters on 29 and 30 September 1990, was an unprecedented gathering of world leaders. Seventy-one Heads of State or Government, together with delegations from an additional 88 countries led by ministers and ambassadors, met to consider the situation of children around the world, to issue a World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and to endorse a detailed Plan of Action for Implementing the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s. The World Declaration and Plan of Action set forth a vision of a "first call" for children by establishing 7 major and 20 supporting goals that were quantifiable and considered achievable by the year 2000.

2. The General Assembly, in resolution 45/217 of 21 December 1990, welcomed the adoption of the World Declaration and the Plan of Action by the World Summit, urged all States and other members of the international community to work for the achievement of the goals endorsed therein, urged donor countries in particular to assist developing countries in achieving those goals and urged all relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations system, including their governing bodies, to provide support for the follow-up to the World Summit for Children. The Declaration and Plan of Action were endorsed by 181 countries, 155 of which subsequently prepared national programmes of action for children.

3. Following a mid-decade review, the Secretary-General reported to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on progress made towards the mid-decade and end-decade goals (A/51/256). In resolution 51/186, the General Assembly welcomed the significant progress made by most countries in achieving the majority of the mid-decade goals and objectives of the World Summit for Children. The Assembly noted with concern the considerable variation in the progress made across countries and regions and the varying rates of progress in relation to the goals and expressed particular concern that progress in the areas of malnutrition, maternal mortality, sanitation and girls' education had been inadequate, and in some cases negligible.

B. Mandate

4. In resolution 51/186, the General Assembly decided to convene a special session in 2001 to review the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children. In resolution 53/193 of 15 December 1998, the Assembly postponed consideration of the arrangements for the special session until its fifty-fourth session.

5. At its fifty-fourth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 54/93 entitled "Special session of the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children in 2001", in which it decided to convene the special session in September 2001. In order to prepare for the session, it decided to establish an open-ended preparatory committee, which will also be open to all States members of the specialized agencies, to address organizational issues and prepare for the outcome of the special session.

6. Considering that the preparatory process cannot be anchored in a functional commission, in a way similar to other preparatory processes (for example, the Commission on the Status of Women for the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Commission on Population and Development for the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development), the General Assembly decided to schedule the sessions of the preparatory committee immediately following the meetings of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). In resolution 54/93, the Assembly called upon UNICEF to support the Secretary-General in assisting the preparatory committee to provide substantive input to the process and at the special session.

7. The organizational session is scheduled to take place on 7 and 8 February and the first substantive session from 30 May to 2 June 2000. The preparatory committee will schedule further meetings at a later stage, as required.

C. Objectives of the special session

8. Bearing in mind the decision of the General Assembly to hold a special session for a review of the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children, the main purpose of the special session should be to review the agreements reached at the Summit, to undertake a renewed commitment and to consider future action for children in the next decade. The end-decade review process will provide the substantive basis for the renewed commitment and consideration of future action for children.

II. Scope of the review and consideration of further initiatives

A. General

9. In his progress report to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 2001 (A/53/186), submitted in accordance with Assembly resolution 51/186, the Secretary-General described the purpose of the end-decade review of goals and targets agreed upon at the Summit. The review will provide an overall assessment of progress achieved and lessons learned, an analysis of the main factors that have inhibited progress, an overview of the remaining challenges and key issues and specific recommendations for the future.

B. National reporting

10. In resolution 51/186, the General Assembly welcomed the significant progress reported by most countries on achieving the majority of the mid-decade goals and objectives of the World Summit for Children and the overwhelming response of all countries, especially the developing countries, to the commitments agreed upon at the World Summit for Children. The General Assembly further stressed the need for sustainable progress in the attainment of goals through, *inter alia*, support for national capacity-building, including that of local communities, civil society and non-governmental organizations, in conformity with the goals of the World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

11. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly invited Governments and relevant organizations, in particular UNICEF, as well as regional and subregional organizations, to undertake reviews of progress achieved since the World Summit for Children and encouraged appropriate national, regional and international preparatory activities with a view to contributing to the preparations for the special session and building partnerships for and with children. It also requested the Secretary-General to assist national Governments, at their request, in their assessment of and reporting on the implementation of the Plan of Action.

12. In compliance with resolution 54/93, the Secretary-General will ask all Member States to undertake an end-decade review of progress in the implementation of the goals of the World Declaration and Plan of Action of the World Summit for Children and to submit reports to the Secretariat.

C. Regional reporting and activities

13. In the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit all regional institutions, including regional political and economic organizations, were requested to include consideration of the World Declaration and Plan of Action on the agenda of their meetings, including at the highest political level, with a view to developing agreements for mutual collaboration for implementation and ongoing monitoring.

14. The mid-decade goals adopted in New York in 1993 emerged from a series of international meetings, including meetings organized by the Organization of African Unity (OAU); the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC); the League of Arab States; and an East Asia and Pacific ministerial consultation. The mid-decade review, on which the Secretary-General reported to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly (A/51/256), was informed by a ministerial review conducted by East Asia and Pacific countries and similar high-level reviews carried out for the SAARC countries and the Americas.

15. In his report to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on preparations for the special session and on progress in the implementation of resolution 51/186, the Secretary-General noted that

regional conferences to follow those held at mid-decade were already under way (A/53/186, para. 48).

16. For example, a regional end-decade review is planned by SAARC and the organization has declared 2000-2010 as the decade of children's rights. In East Asia and the Pacific, a ministerial consultation on children and development, the fifth such consultation since 1990, is planned for early 2001, in Beijing. In Latin America and the Caribbean, four ministerial meetings have been held since the World Summit to assess and analyse progress towards the achievement of its goals. The most recent of these meetings, held in Lima, in November 1998, adopted the Lima Accord, setting out specific actions to be implemented by countries of the region before 2000 to accelerate progress towards the goals of the Summit. The next ministerial meeting on children and social policy in the Americas will be held in Jamaica in October 2000. Additionally, at the last Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, held in Havana in November 1999, the elected chair, the President of Panama, announced that the central theme of the tenth Ibero-American Summit, which will be held in Panama in November 2000, Is "Children and Adolescents".

17. It is hoped that by reflecting on national-level analyses, reviews and policy discussions, these and other regional processes will assist in the identification and synthesis of overall trends and lessons learned and contribute to the work of the preparatory committee in building global consensus on the remaining major challenges and priorities for future action.

D. Assessment of global trends

18. In order to provide the preparatory committee and the special session with the most up-to-date and comprehensive but concise overview of global trends, and in compliance with the General Assembly's request in paragraph 16 of resolution 54/93, the Secretary-General will report on emerging issues to the substantive session of the preparatory committee. This document will draw on the report presented to the Executive Board of UNICEF in June 1999 entitled "Future global vision for children — imperatives for the twenty-first century", and on the extensive technical consultations which UNICEF is undertaking with a range of experts working in government, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions.

19. The report of the Secretary-General will be presented to the preparatory committee for the United Nations special session, to be held from 30 May to 2 June 2000, and will also be submitted as an annex to an update on emerging issues which the Executive Director of UNICEF will present to the annual session of the Executive Board, which is to be held from 22 to 26 May 2000.

20. Delegations will also have for consideration a conference room paper on the outcome of the World Education Forum to be held in Dakar in April 2000. Additional inputs will include reports from regional consultations.

III. Role of the United Nations system

A. Background

21. The World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit in 1990 urged all international development agencies, multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental, to examine how they could contribute to the achievement of the goals approved in the Plan of Action and recognized the special role of UNICEF as the world's lead agency for children.

22. The report of the Secretary-General to the fifty-third session of the General Assembly discussed the role of each part of the United Nations system in the implementation of the Plan of Action and, in particular, the way in which subsequent conferences such as the International Conference on Population and Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development also adopted child-related goals.

23. Since 1995, the Economic and Social Council and the Administrative Committee on Coordination have underscored the strong linkages and common themes among the programmes of action of the various global conferences and have stressed the need for coordinated and integrated follow-up.

24. In resolution 54/93, the General Assembly invited all relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, including the funds and programmes, the specialized agencies and the international financial institutions, to actively participate in the preparations for the special session.

B. Initial activities

25. At a meeting held in Geneva on 28 and 29 September 1999, UNICEF invited the Europe-based agencies (World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), World Trade Organization (WTO), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Food Programme (WFP), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and United Nations Volunteers), to formally apprise UNICEF of the process of review and assessment of the implementation of the World Declaration. At that meeting, the Executive Director of UNICEF outlined the review process and indicated that, as previously mandated, the entire United Nations system would be requested to report on its contribution to the process of implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action of the Summit.

26. The recent reforms in the operational activities of the United Nations, the introduction of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, the strengthening of the resident coordinator system and the establishment of the United Nations Development Group have added a new dimension to the implementation of the agendas and plans of action. In consequence, UNICEF has also requested the Development Group to incorporate into its agenda a discussion of its participation in this exercise.

IV. Role of civil society, including non-governmental organizations, and other actors

27. In his report to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly on progress at mid-decade on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 45/217 on the World Summit for Children (A/51/256), the Secretary-General noted that the extraordinary level of social mobilization, advocacy and concrete action on behalf of children precipitated both by the passage of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the World Summit for Children would not have gathered such momentum or achieved such results were it not for the contribution of non-governmental organizations.

28. In resolution 51/186, the General Assembly encouraged civil society and the private sector to continue to generously support the implementation of the goals of the World Summit for Children and in resolution 54/93, the Assembly recognized the important role of all relevant actors, including non-governmental organizations, in implementing the Plan of Action and stressed the need for their active involvement in the preparatory process, including the preparatory committee, and at the special session.

29. A number of non-governmental organizations, including members of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on UNICEF, have already expressed their eagerness to fulfil the role thus envisaged for them. The modalities for their involvement will be addressed by the preparatory committee.